

Norwood-Dingell bill sends the wrong message to the American people, and the wrong messengers to the conference committee.

The Norwood-Dingell Patients' Bill of Rights legislation is the only patient protections bill in this Congress that has received strong bipartisan support. Yet, out of the 13 Republican members appointed as conferees, only one voted for this legislation, and only one voted in favor of yesterday's successful motion in the House that instructed conferees to insist on including the provisions of the Norwood-Dingell bill.

It is clear that the public longs for us to reach across party lines to address issues of national concern. There are few matters that are more important than enacting a strong Patients Bill of Rights. In this regard, I am asking you to use your authority under the House rules to expand the conference committee to include members who accurately reflect the will of the House.

We need to make certain that the results of this conference will be in the public interest; as currently constituted, this committee is weighted heavily in favor of the special interests that oppose this bill. Over the years, we have worked together on drafting and passing bipartisan health care legislation, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. I hope we can build on that record so that this Congress can respond to the public's need for patients' protections as our nation's health care delivery system undergoes change.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Radio Remarks on Expansion of a Wildlife Refuge To Protect the Salmon Habitat in the Columbia River

November 5, 1999

Today I announced the expansion of a wildlife refuge to protect the prime salmon habitat along the Columbia River. This supports our treaty with Canada to protect Pacific Coast salmon.

My budget proposes increases for salmon restoration, but Congress has provided only a fraction of the resources necessary to do the job. So, again, I call on Congress to provide the necessary resources to support this treaty and to work with me on a budget process that observes our obligations and protects and preserves our environment.

NOTE: The President's remarks were recorded approximately at 12:15 p.m. at the Hermitage Tomato Cooperative Association in Hermitage, Arkansas. These remarks were also made available on the White House Press Office Actuality Line.

Statement on Funding for the Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill

November 5, 1999

I am pleased that we have reached an agreement with congressional leaders on a budget that will permit America to advance its most critical priorities around the world. This agreement meets our commitments to the Middle East peace process, funds our efforts to safeguard nuclear weapons and expertise in the former Soviet Union, makes an initial investment in debt relief for impoverished countries, including in Africa and Latin America, and allows us to do our part in bringing stability and democracy to southeast Europe. I hope this marks the start of a bipartisan effort to ensure that America has not only the will but the resources to lead.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Disaster Assistance and Relocation Funding for States Struck by Hurricane Floyd

November 5, 1999

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. Leader:)

When Hurricane Floyd swept through the Mid-Atlantic region, it left in its wake a wide path of destruction and despair. Since that time, my Administration has been working closely with all of the affected States to ensure that Federal disaster assistance programs are used to the maximum extent possible to support residents as they repair and rebuild their communities and their lives.